Passports issued in Tamil Nadu

2527. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of passports issued in Tamil Nadu in 2006-07;

(b) the number of passports issued in Tamil Nadu in the current fiscal year upto July 31, 2007;

(c) whether it is a fact that there is a backlog of applications from various districts in Tamil Nadu; and

(d) in what manner Government propose to streamline the passport system in Tamil Nadu to make it easier for poorer sections to get their passports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) 5,70,842 passports were issued in Tamil Nadu during 2006-2007.

(b) 1,92,979 passports were issued in Tamil Nadu in the current fiscal year upto July, 2007.

(c) and (d) Passport Offices in Tamil Nadu are instructed and offered assistance from time to time to clear any backlog resulting from rush of applications. To expedite issue of passports, State police authorities have been urged to complete the police verification reports in time. Public has been encouraged to file applications 'online'. In addition, the Government have further liberalised passport rules in December 2006. Two more passport offices are proposed to be opened in Madurai and Coimbatore.

Issuance of fake passports

2528. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether CAG has pointed out that a well-oiled racket involving local police and passport offices, was found issuing fake passports;

(b) whether Delhi and Bareilly regional passport offices were found issuing passports to foreign nationals from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka;

(c) whether a number of incidents in which lost passports landed in the hands of terrorists and criminals were also reported;

(d) whether CAG blamed the Ministry for its failure to initiate corrective measures to strengthen its internal controls;

(e) whether cases have been registered for theft of passports; and

(f) Government's reaction to the above scenario?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) While the Government has not come across any